

**Calendar No. 475**

109TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

**S. 2321**

To require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration  
of Louis Braille.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 17, 2006

Mr. SANTORUM (for himself, Mr. DODD, Mr. BENNETT, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. LOTT, Mr. BUNNING, Mr. HATCH, Mr. BURNS, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. DAYTON, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. BURR, Mr. CRAPO, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. VITTER, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. BINGAMAN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. LEVIN, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. AKAKA, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. REED, Mr. LUGAR, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. INOUE, Mr. KERRY, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. BAYH, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. MARTINEZ, Mr. TALENT, Mr. BOND, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. CHAFEE, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, Mr. VOINOVICH, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. PRYOR, Mr. DORGAN, Mrs. DOLE, Mr. THOMAS, Mr. DEMINT, Mr. KYL, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. REID, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. ROBERTS, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. SMITH, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. WARNER, and Mr. SESSIONS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

JUNE 21, 2006

Reported by Mr. Shelby, without amendment

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**A BILL**

To require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins  
in commemoration of Louis Braille.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
 2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Louis Braille Bicenten-  
 5       nial—Braille Literacy Commemorative Coin Act”.

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       Congress finds as follows:

8               (1) Louis Braille, who invented the Braille  
 9       method for reading and writing by the blind that has  
 10       allowed millions of blind people to be literate partici-  
 11       pants in their societies, was born in Coupvray, a  
 12       small village near Paris, on January 4, 1809.

13              (2) Braille lost his sight at the age of 3, after  
 14       injuring himself with an awl in the shop of his fa-  
 15       ther Rene, a maker of harnesses and other objects  
 16       of leather.

17              (3) A youth who was both intelligent and cre-  
 18       ative, Braille was blessed with dedicated parents, a  
 19       thoughtful local priest, and an energetic local school-  
 20       teacher.

21              (4) Braille adapted to his situation and at-  
 22       tended local school with other children of his age, an  
 23       unheard-of practice for a blind child of the period.

24              (5) At the age of 10, when his schooling other-  
 25       wise would have stopped, Braille, with the aid of his

1 priest and schoolteacher, was given a scholarship by  
2 a local nobleman and went to Paris to attend the  
3 Royal Institute for Blind Children, where he became  
4 the youngest pupil.

5 (6) At the Institute, most instruction was oral  
6 but Braille found there were books for the blind,  
7 large, expensive-to-produce books, in which the text  
8 was of large letters embossed upon the page.

9 (7) Soon, Braille had read all 14 books in the  
10 school, but thirsted for more.

11 (8) Charles Barbier de la Serre, a captain in  
12 Napoleon's army, had invented "night writing", a  
13 method for communicating on the battlefield amidst  
14 the thick smoke of combat, or at night without light-  
15 ing a match (which would aid enemy gunners), that  
16 used dots and dashes that were felt and interpreted  
17 with the fingers. He later adapted the method for  
18 use by the blind, calling it "Sonography", because it  
19 represented words by sounds, rather than spelling.

20 (9) Braille adopted the Sonography method in-  
21 stantly, but soon recognized that the basis in sound  
22 and the large number of dots, as many as 12, used  
23 to represent words was too cumbersome.

24 (10) By the age of 15, and using a blunt awl,  
25 the same sort of tool that had blinded him, Braille

1 had developed what is essentially modern Braille, a  
 2 code that uses no more than 6 dots in a “cell” of  
 3 2 columns of 3 dots each to represent each letter,  
 4 and contains a system of punctuation and of “con-  
 5 tractions” to speed writing and reading.

6 (11) In contrast to the bulky books consisting  
 7 of large embossed letters, Braille books can contain  
 8 as many as 1,000 characters or contractions on a  
 9 standard 11-by-12-inch page of heavy paper, and to  
 10 this day, Braille can be punched with an awl-like  
 11 “stylus” into paper held in a metal “slate” that is  
 12 very similar to the ones that Louis Braille adapted  
 13 from Barbier’s original “night writing” devices.

14 (12) Also a talented organist who supported  
 15 himself by giving concerts, Braille went on to de-  
 16 velop the Braille representation of music, and in  
 17 1829, published the first-ever Braille book, a manual  
 18 about how to read and write music.

19 (13) 8 years later, in 1837, Braille followed  
 20 that publication with another book detailing a sys-  
 21 tem of representation of mathematics.

22 (14) Braille’s talents were quickly recognized,  
 23 and at age 17, he was made the first blind appren-  
 24 tice teacher at the school, where he taught algebra,  
 25 grammar, music, and geography.

1           (15) He and 2 blind classmates, his friends who  
2           probably were the first people to learn to read and  
3           write Braille, later became the first 3 blind full pro-  
4           fessors at the school.

5           (16) However, despite the fact that many blind  
6           people enthusiastically adopted the system of writing  
7           and reading, there was great skepticism among  
8           sighted people about the real usefulness of Braille’s  
9           code, and even at the Royal Institute, it was not  
10          taught until after his death on January 6, 1852.

11          (17) Braille did not start to spread widely until  
12          1868 when a group of British men, later to become  
13          known as the Royal National Institute for the Blind,  
14          began publicizing and teaching the system.

15          (18) Braille did not become the official and sole  
16          method of reading and writing for blind United  
17          States citizens until the 20th Century.

18          (19) Helen Keller, a Braille reader of another  
19          generation, said: “Braille has been a most precious  
20          aid to me in many ways. It made my going to college  
21          possible—it was the only method by which I could  
22          take notes on lectures. All my examination papers  
23          were copied for me in this system. I use Braille as  
24          a spider uses its web—to catch thoughts that flit

1 across my mind for speeches, messages, and manu-  
2 scripts.”.

3 (20) While rapid technological advances in the  
4 20th Century have greatly aided the blind in many  
5 ways by speeding access to information, each ad-  
6 vance has seen a commensurate drop in the teaching  
7 of Braille, to the point that only about 10 percent  
8 of blind students today are taught the system.

9 (21) However, for the blind not to know Braille  
10 is in itself a handicap, because literacy is the ability  
11 to read and the ability to write and the ability to do  
12 the 2 interactively.

13 (22) The National Federation of the Blind, the  
14 Nation’s oldest membership organization consisting  
15 of blind members, has been a champion of the  
16 Braille code, of Braille literacy for all blind people,  
17 and of the memory of Louis Braille, and continues  
18 its Braille literacy efforts today through its divisions  
19 emphasizing Braille literacy, education of blind chil-  
20 dren, and employment of the blind.

21 (23) Braille literacy aids the blind in taking re-  
22 sponsible and self-sufficient roles in society, such as  
23 employment. While 70 percent of the blind are un-  
24 employed, 85 percent of the employed blind are  
25 Braille-literate.

1 **SEC. 3. COIN SPECIFICATIONS.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treasury  
3 (hereafter in this Act referred to as the “Secretary”) shall  
4 mint and issue not more than 400,000 \$1 coins bearing  
5 the designs specified in section 4(a), each of which shall—

6 (1) weigh 26.73 grams;

7 (2) have a diameter of 1.500 inches; and

8 (3) contain 90 percent silver and 10 percent  
9 copper.

10 (b) LEGAL TENDER.—The coins minted under this  
11 Act shall be legal tender, as provided in section 5103 of  
12 title 31, United States Code.

13 (c) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section  
14 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all coins minted  
15 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

16 **SEC. 4. DESIGN OF COINS.**

17 (a) DESIGN REQUIREMENTS.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—The design of the coins  
19 minted under this Act shall be emblematic of the life  
20 and legacy of Louis Braille.

21 (2) OBVERSE.—The design on the obverse shall  
22 bear a representation of the image of Louis Braille.

23 (3) REVERSE.—The design on the reverse shall  
24 emphasize Braille literacy, and shall specifically in-  
25 clude the word for Braille in Braille code (the  
26 Braille capital sign and the letters Brl) represented

1 in a way that complies with section 3 of specification  
 2 800 of the National Library Service for the Blind  
 3 and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Con-  
 4 gress specifications for Braille, and is tactilely indis-  
 5 cernible from printed or written Braille.

6 (4) DESIGNATION AND INSCRIPTIONS.—On  
 7 each coin minted under this Act, there shall be—

8 (A) a designation of the value of the coin;

9 (B) an inscription of the year “2009”; and

10 (C) inscriptions of the words “Liberty”,  
 11 “In God We Trust”, “United States of Amer-  
 12 ica”, and “E Pluribus Unum”.

13 (b) SELECTION.—The design for the coins minted  
 14 under this Act shall be—

15 (1) selected by the Secretary, after consultation  
 16 with the Commission of Fine Arts and the National  
 17 Federation of the Blind; and

18 (2) reviewed by the Citizens Coinage Advisory  
 19 Committee.

## 20 **SEC. 5. ISSUANCE OF COINS.**

21 (a) QUALITY OF COINS.—Coins minted under this  
 22 Act shall be issued in uncirculated and proof qualities.

23 (b) MINT FACILITY.—Only 1 facility of the United  
 24 States Mint may be used to strike any particular quality  
 25 of the coins minted under this Act.



1       (c) PERIOD FOR ISSUANCE.—The Secretary may  
2 issue coins minted under this Act only during the 1-year  
3 period beginning on January 1, 2009.

4 **SEC. 6. SALE OF COINS.**

5       (a) SALE PRICE.—The coins issued under this Act  
6 shall be sold by the Secretary at a price equal to the sum  
7 of—

8           (1) the face value of the coins;

9           (2) the surcharge provided in section 7(a) with  
10 respect to such coins; and

11           (3) the cost of designing and issuing the coins  
12 (including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery,  
13 overhead expenses, marketing, and shipping).

14       (b) BULK SALES.—The Secretary shall make bulk  
15 sales of the coins issued under this Act at a reasonable  
16 discount.

17       (c) PREPAID ORDERS.—

18           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall accept  
19 prepaid orders for the coins minted under this Act  
20 before the issuance of such coins.

21           (2) DISCOUNT.—Sale prices with respect to pre-  
22 paid orders under paragraph (1) shall be at a rea-  
23 sonable discount.

1 **SEC. 7. SURCHARGES.**

2 (a) SURCHARGE REQUIRED.—All sales of coins under  
3 this Act shall include a surcharge of \$10 per coin.

4 (b) DISTRIBUTION.—Subject to section 5134(f) of  
5 title 31, United States Code, all surcharges which are re-  
6 ceived by the Secretary from the sale of coins issued under  
7 this Act shall be promptly paid by the Secretary to the  
8 National Federation of the Blind, to further its programs  
9 to promote Braille literacy.

10 (c) AUDITS.—The National Federation of the Blind  
11 shall be subject to the audit requirements of section  
12 5134(f)(2) of title 31, United States Code, with regard  
13 to the amounts received by the National Federation of the  
14 Blind under subsection (b).



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